

Collaboration of Visual Literacy and Social Justice Issues with ELLs

Action Research Project

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ABSTRACT

This lesson is geared toward ninth-grade English language learners to increase their cultural awareness of a social justice issue and allow them the opportunity to create a story related to the topic. Through the use of multiple literacies, students are able to gain an understanding of topics that are of high importance to their adolescent lives, such as bullying. Visual literacies are a supplemental material in an ELL classroom, as the images are able to guide the learners' thoughts and ideas. Allowing creative writing to occur gives the students an opportunity to express their "voice" and take ownership of their work. The use of technology in regard to visual literacies and creative writing will continue the development of these adolescents in preparation for their future life in the forever-advancing technological world that we live in.

As each day passes, the world we live in is constantly evolving to incorporate new technological ideas that are being developed and introduced. In order for our students to be intellectually prepared to live in such a world, we as educators need to be constantly upgrading, as well. It is our obligation to continuously modify our curriculums and lessons to accommodate these changing times. Without our assistance, our students will be deprived of the opportunity to meet their full potential when they enter into the workforce.

It is also our duty to encourage our students to express their ideas freely while maintaining a respectful and considerate attitude. Creating an environment in a classroom where students can engage in meaningful conversations about social justice issues such as race, gender, class, and sexuality will act as a guide as they enter into the real world. The level of tolerance in the United States is much more liberal than in other countries, which makes this a pressing issue when dealing with students who have come from the other side of the globe.

RESEARCH SUPPORTING THE UNIT

Incorporation of Technology with ELLS

The use of online tools in an ELL classroom promotes student-centered learning where the instructor becomes more of a facilitator. Students are able to use the Internet as a scaffold, considering it allows complete access to supplementary materials like websites, dictionaries, thesauruses, and grammar helpers (Reynard). Many ELLs do not have access to technological devices in their homes due to socio-economic status. In order for them to be fully prepared to continue their education or move into the workforce, they need to be exposed and taught how to properly use Web 2.0 Tools.

Cooperative Learning

It is necessary to accommodate ELLs during instruction, and a way to increase comprehension is through the utilization of cooperative learning. Allowing students to interact with one another allows them to continuously develop their knowledge of English in regard to literacy. Interaction and collaboration are crucial factors in a second-language classroom to continue the development of sociolinguistic competency (Pu p. 145).

Visual Literacy

The use of visual literacy in an ELL classroom can guide learning in a way that students gain an understanding of a topic and are able to spend more time to exploring the content. Providing students with these supplemental materials will dramatically increase their understanding of the key concepts. “Picture books tell stories in both words and pictures” (O’Neil p. 214). Students need to be able to decode both visuals and text. The process of creative writing with only pictures as a base requires the students to read the picture in order to relate it to the text. In order to meet this requirement, students have to critically analyze the visual information they are seeing. In a secondary setting, critical analysis and synthesis is the main goal that we are aiming to achieve.

LESSON IN CONTEXT

This lesson was designed to address some typical adolescent behavior I was witnessing in my ninth grade Intermediate English as a Second Language classroom. This particular class consists of sixteen students ranging from the ages of fourteen to sixteen. The gender makeup is nine girls and seven boys. These students derive from five different places of origin. These varying locations are Iraq, Nepal, Puerto Rico, Somalia, and Thailand. Not only do their diverse cultures cause a language barrier, but the vast difference in culture only increases the

misunderstandings that may sometimes occur. As any nationalistic member of a society would know, the beliefs and language of your cultural group is of high importance to you and your family. If you were to ever feel disrespected, an initial reaction would be to get upset and possibly say things or react in an irrational way that may be hurtful to others. As a result to these previously mentioned factors, an uprising tension was beginning to occur, a dysfunctional aspect in any classroom that is trying to achieve high standards. In order to prohibit these occurrences from continuing any further, I decided that a unit on bullying must be implemented.

On the first and second days of the unit, students were exposed to a topic that is considered to be one of my most drastic measures taken to “fight back” against bullying; the shooting that occurred in 1999 at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Without knowing the shooters motives, students watched a documentary (Columbine Shooting: The Final Report) about what happened that day at the high school. Students took notes on anything that stood out to them or any questions that they wanted to address after the video. After the video was completed, a discussion took place based on what students had written. Each student had to share at least one comment they had recorded on their paper. Before moving on to the next student, at least two additional students were asked to comment on previous student’s statement. At the end of the discussion, the following two questions were posted on the whiteboard:

Figure 1

- | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>(a) <i>What was the cause of this incident?</i></p> <p>(b) <i>Is there any way it could have been prevented?</i></p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Students had to conduct a think-pair-share with a partner. After five minutes had passed, these questions were brought into a whole-group discussion for the remainder of the block. Students were encouraged to discuss this issue amongst one another while I tried to solely observe.

On the third and fourth day, students were introduced to the concept of bullying while also continuing to analyze the Columbine tragedy. We began the class with Frayer Model for the term *bullying*. Students were asked to brainstorm and generate a definition for the term collaboratively at their tables, where they were seated in groups of four. We compiled all of the ideas into a single definition. Tables were then expected to complete the graphic organizer with examples, non-examples, and a visual representation of *bullying*. Students followed this activity with a quick write about bullying. The quick write had to match the following criteria:

Figure 2

Answer the following questions with one or two well-developed paragraphs.

- a. Have you ever been bullied, witnessed someone being bullied, or been a bully to someone else?*
- b. How do you think the person being bullied felt?*
- c. How do you think the person acting as the bully felt?*

The final activity on the fourth day was a read and reflect activity. Students received a newspaper article that was published shortly after the incident at Columbine High School (TERROR IN LITTLETON:THE SUSPECTS; Portraits of Outcasts Seeking to Stand Out). This article was written from the perspective of law officials, family members of the shooters, and classmates who knew the boys. Once students finished the reading, they had to answer reflective questions that required them to gather, analyze, and synthesize the information that they had read.

Students increased their amount of background knowledge of bullying by making personal connections and analyzing true-life events, so they were ready and eager to continue on to the creative phase. Students were given a tutorial of Storybird (www.storybird.com) by me.

The tutorial consisted of critiquing some Storybirds that were present on the website. After determining the elements of a “good” Storybird versus a “bad” Storybird, we made a list of what we needed to include and what not to include in our final productions. I would later use these elements to create a rubric to assess performance. As a class, we created two Storybirds together. Throughout this process, I was able to model how to efficiently navigate the site and utilize the tool in a productive and appropriate manner. This final day of instruction prepared the students to work collaboratively during production on the following day. Students were given the option to work independently or with a partner to create their own Storybird based on the theme, *Bullying*. Students were given two eighty-minute classes to complete their project.

In order to finalize their projects, students were required to have a conference with me. During our conference, the student(s) and I read their story. Together, we made corrections that were necessary in regard to grammar. These mistakes would only be corrected if they were concepts that had been reviewed in class or if they made the story incomprehensible. After their creations were graded using the rubric that was created from the class discussion, I showed students how to publish their work to make it viewable to anyone who visits the website.

ADAPTATION OF CONTENT FOR ELLS

Due to varied levels of English proficiency and with consideration of different cultural beliefs, it was necessary for me to differentiate instruction throughout the week in order to meet the needs of each student, while maintaining a respectful tone. Some issues that I had to keep in mind during the week were that certain concepts may require more than the original allotted amount of time, emotional feelings and concerns may arise during the discussion of weaponry, and the final productions would vary in regard to language skills and creativity.

A unit that I had planned to take only five days had to be extended to eight. The documentary, which was only eighty minutes long (one class), was viewed over a period of two days. I had to continuously stop the video to check for understanding and answer students' questions in order to clarify meaning. The reading of the article took two days, as well. Again, due to the level of English used in the article, it was quite difficult to understand (even with the modifications that I made previous to the lesson- defining key terms in the side margins). These are issues that teachers face every day when we work with students of varying levels. It is our job to ensure that each student is receiving the same knowledge, and that may require that we completely adjust everything in our plans.

The use of weapons in the documentary and discussions was something that I had to be mindful of. The majority of students in this class are refugees, those who are removed from their country in order to be moved to safety. Most of these students grew up around war, listening to bombs and shooting every day outside their homes. Many of them were unable to complete any type of studies, because it was impossible to focus any time and attention on schooling when their lives were constantly being threatened. In order to accommodate these students, I did make them aware that this is not a common occurrence amongst schools, and this incident was extremely drastic. At the same time, I did have to reaffirm the fact that this was a non-fictional story that resulted from bullying in a high school.

While grading the final productions, I had to take into account the different levels of language skills that each student possesses. Although each student is labeled Intermediate by New York State, the levels of literacy within the class are to the extreme, with reading levels ranging from three to eight. It has been almost a complete year since the students were assessed by the state. As educators, we know that the rate of growth in student ability varies with each

child. At this point in the year, I have realized the strengths and weaknesses for each individual student. Therefore, I rated every individual based on what I know they can produce rather than comparing them to one another. This adaptation is of high importance. When assessing ELLs in a project such as this, where they are freely expressing their own opinions, it is important to focus highly on the positives in order to maintain an encouraging relationship. This will only motivate the student to continue working toward their language development.

OBJECTIVES OF THE UNIT

The objectives that were set for this unit addressed the social justice issue, the utilization of visual literacies and a Web 2.0 Tool, and the process of creative writing. The three objectives for the students were:

- (1) Develop a critical understanding of the social justice issue bullying by interpreting and evaluating real-life events
- (2) Develop computer literacy by using a Web 2.0 Tool to create a fictional story
- (3) Increase knowledge of English through the writing processes of drafting, editing, and publishing

CORRELATION WITH COMMON CORE AND NEW YORK STATE ESL STANDARDS

The development of this lesson aligns with the Common Core for ninth grade English Language Arts and the New York State English as a Second Language Standards.

Common Core for Ninth Grade English Language Arts

Key Ideas and Details

1. Cite strong and thorough evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Text Types and Purposes

3. Write narrative to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
 - b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

New York State English as Second Language Standards

Standard 1: Students will listen, speak, and write in English for information and understanding.

- Indicator 1. Identify and use reading and listening strategies to make text comprehensible and meaningful.
- Indicator 2. Read, gather, view, listen to, organize, discuss, interpret, and analyze information related to academic content areas from various sources.
- Indicator 5. Formulate, ask, and respond to various questions forms to obtain, clarify, and extend information and meaning.

- Indicator 7. Present information clearly in a variety of oral and written forms for different audiences and purposes related to all academic content areas.
- Indicator 9. Convey and organize information, using facts, details, illustrative examples, and a variety of patterns and structures.
- Indicator 12. Convey information and ideas through spoken and written language, using convention and features of American English appropriate to audience and purpose.
- Indicator 16. Apply learning strategies to acquire information and make texts comprehensible and meaningful.

Standard 2: Students will listen, speak, read, and write in English for literary response, enjoyment, and expression.

- Indicator 2. Apply reading and listening strategies to make literary text comprehensible and meaningful.
- Indicator 8. Create stories, poems, sketches, songs, and plays, including those that reflect traditional and popular American culture, using typical feature of a given genre; create an effective voice, using a variety of writing styles appropriate to different audiences, purposes, and settings.
- Indicator 9. Engage in collaborative activities through a variety of student groupings to create and respond to literature.

Standard 3: Students will listen, speak, read, and write in English for critical analysis and evaluation.

- Indicator 7. Engage in collaborative activities through a variety of groupings to discuss, share, reflect on, develop, and express, and to interpret opinions and evaluations about a variety of experiences, ideas, and information.

Standard 4: Students will listen, speak, read, and write in English for classroom and social interaction.

- Indicator 3. Request and provide information and assistance, orally or in writing, for personal, social, and academic purposes.
- Indicator 4. Listen attentively, take turns speaking, and build on others' ideas when engaged in pair, group, or full-class discussions on personal, social community, and academic topics.
- Indicator 7. Follow oral and written directions to participate in classroom activities, and provide directions to peers in selected interactions.
- Indicator 10. Demonstrate appropriate classroom behaviors.

Standard 5: Students will demonstrate cross-cultural knowledge and understanding.

- Indicator 6. Recognize and demonstrate an appreciation of some commonalities and distinctions across cultures and groups.

OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Documentary Responses

Throughout the showing of the documentary during the first and second day of the unit, the responses were quite similar among the class, as they all seemed to be nothing less than appalled at the actions these students took during their violent rampage against students and staff at their high school. As the documentary rolled on, gasps and sighs could be heard throughout the room. Conversation was kept to a minimum, but a constant string of questions were being directed my way in regard to clarification and why they would be doing such a thing.

It was obvious that the students were meeting Objective (1) as they were trying to predict the reason as to why these shooters were behaving in such a manner. Some of the following questions were asked during the video:

- (a) Why are they shooting teachers?*
- (b) Are they crazy?*
- (c) Where did they get the guns?*
- (d) Why are they talking about students with white hats?*
- (e) How is it possible that some people lived?*
- (f) Did the boys go to jail?*

These questions caused many discussions to occur where other students were trying to fathom some sort of answer that would explain this almost unbelievable occurrence. Responses are labeled with the letter that corresponds to the question above:

- (a) Maybe, the teacher gave them a bad grade.*
- (b) They have to be crazy!*
- (c) They probably ordered them online or stole them.*
- (d) The students with white hats must be in a group that they don't like.**
- (e) Maybe they didn't get shot.*
- (f) I think they killed themselves.**

*(*These questions were answered by students that were familiar with the story due to a previous class)*

At the conclusion of the documentary, there was no need to conduct the group discussion that had been originally planned, because students were engaging in an ongoing discussion each time I stopped the video. We moved on to the final two questions that were presented in *Figure 1*. Selected responses that represent the opinion of the class are shown in *Figure 3*. By viewing the documentary, students were able to gain an understanding and critically analyze the negative effects of bullying can have when taken to an extreme while synthesizing preventions for this social justice issue.

Figure 3

Question	Student Responses
<i>What was the cause of this incident?</i>	<i>The boys were angry and upset.</i>
	<i>They didn't like students in their school. They didn't like the people who played sports.</i>
	<i>They were bullied. People thought they were losers.</i>
<i>Is there any way it could have been prevented?</i>	<i>They could have told a teacher.</i>
	<i>The boys should have talked to someone or tried to make more friends.</i>
	<i>The other students could have been nicer to them.</i>

Frayer Model and Quick Write

Introducing the term, *bullying*, with a graphic organizer fostered creativity among the students. They worked collaboratively to complete each section in their respective groups. When I asked each group to share their definition with the whole group, I found that each group had used different words within their response. As a group, we determined how to combine all of the responses to make a descriptive definition of the term. I found that while students were brainstorming examples, I had to clarify that bullying normally occurs between people within the same peer group. In *Figure 4*, there is an example of a Frayer Model completed by one of the students. You can see that in her graphic organizer, some of the examples included were about a student bullying a teacher or their parent. This misconception was clarified after a brief discussion.

When the Quick Write was introduced as shown earlier in *Figure 2*, it was clear that the students were very excited to be able to share some of their own experiences with bullying. When working with all students, it is engaging and accommodating to make personal

connections to their own lives. Accessing prior knowledge about a topic fosters an environment that is more conducive to their learning. Examples of the Quick Writes can be seen in *Figure 5.1* and *5.2*.

After assessing the responses, it is clear that students were developing a critical understanding of the social justice issue. Not only were they able to brainstorm a definition after viewing the documentary, but they were also able to engage in meaningful conversations with their peers and apply the word to their own lives. When students are able to apply a new term, it demonstrates that they have reached the level to critically analyze the term in that particular context.

Figure 4

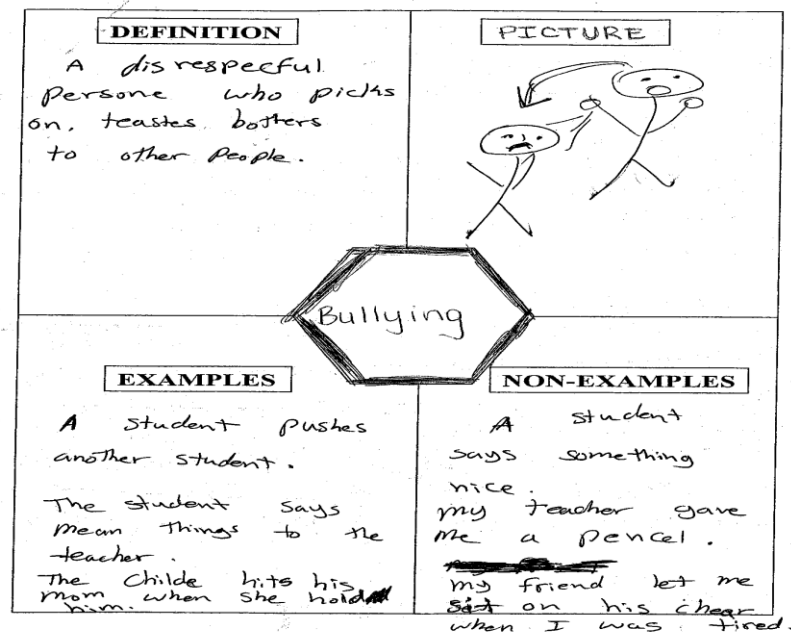


Figure 5.1

Bullying

Bullying is not a good thing to do...
 if some one bullying you how you feel?
 is hurt you feel, and sad.

- One time is happen to me and my friend in school is happen every class. She bullying us, and we feel so sad but we can't do anything. But one thing i can do is tell my teacher that is one way i can do. I tell my teacher and my teacher solve the problem for me. is really hurt my feel but she don't know she think that is fun for her she laugh at me and my friend when she bully us, my fri really get angry. My friend want to bully her back but i tell my friend to not do that... if we do that the bullying thing never stop is will be big problem, and we tell teacher but she didn't not stop bullying us. So my friend can't feel bullying thing anymore so he fight with her. Thinking about when people bully you how you feel, you feel sad. Just like when you bullying some one they feel just like you.

Figure 5.2

② Well I was at my house with my sister, mom, dad and other friends. My sister was in the bedroom with my other sister. She came out and started talking with my sister naty and my other sister star. ~~Smile~~ and she started talking more laugh to me and she made me feel mad and sad because she was laugh and I think she felt bad because of that and she said that she was sorry and I think it happened because my sister naty and me was smiling and talking.

Read and Reflect

The incorporation of the newspaper article allowed students to further enhance their understanding of the event that occurred. Responses to the reflection question are shown in

Figure 6.1 and 6.2

Figure 6.1

Name _____

Article Reflection

1. Who were the suspects in the article? How would you define the word "suspect?"
 Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were the suspects in the article.
 suspect means a person or institution against whom an action is brought in a court of law
2. How were Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold described in the article? Would you be friends with them? Why or why not?
 Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold described as a shooters who were killing people because the people were bullying them. Person being sued or accused
 No I don't want to be friends with them because they are dangerous.
3. How was Columbine High School described? Do you think that is similar to Fowler High School? Why or why not?
 Columbine High school described as a sad school because after the shooting nobody will go to that school anymore.
 Fowler High school is different from Columbine High school because in Fowler there's no shooting.
4. Would you ever expect something like this to happen at our school? Why or why not?
 No, because I don't want to see people killing in my school, and

Figure 6.2

Name _____
 Article Reflection

- Who were the suspects in the article? How would you define the word "suspect?"
 Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold.
 Suspect means the people that the story was about.
- How were Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold described in the article? Would you be friends with them? Why or why not?
 Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were the killers in the story and I want to be friends with them because it wasn't their fault it was the bullies fault.
- How was Columbine High School described? Do you think that is similar to Fowler High School? Why or why not?
 Columbine High school were not bad but lots of bullies. Fowler is better because there's lots of police man in it but there's bullies everywhere.
- Would you ever expect something like this to happen at our school? Why or why not?
 I would never expect something like that in my school because that's mean and ~~it~~ it could be dangerous too.

While assessing the student responses, it was apparent that the students had varying opinions.

Some students felt sympathetic for Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris because they were being bullied. Other students sided against the shooters. The fact that some students had the perspective that most would not, it made for some engaging conversation amongst the group.

Storybird

After viewing several Storybirds, students were able to decide what they thought depicted a well-developed Storybird. The five most important aspects that they decided on were:

- (1) Grammar
- (2) Theme
- (3) Length
- (4) Plot
- (5) Creativity

Based on their responses, I created the rubric in *Figure 7*. This rubric was used to assess Objectives (2) and (3).

Figure 7

	0	1	2
Grammar	There are multiple grammar errors. The errors make the story incomprehensible.	There are some grammatical errors present within the writing. The errors do not affect the reader's ability to comprehend the story.	Sentences contain at least one subject and one predicate. Capitalization and punctuation are applied when necessary.
Theme	The plot has no element of the required theme present	The plot hints at the theme of bullying.	The plot aligns with the theme of bullying.
Length	There are one or less pages with writing in the story.	There are between two and four pages of writing within the story.	There are at least five pages with writing within the story.
Plot	There is no plot. There is no problem or solution.	The plot is somewhat developed. The events are sequenced, but there is no clear problem and/or solution.	The plot is well-developed with an evident story line. There is a problem and solution.
Creativity	The story is not exciting to read due to lack of detail and effort put into the writing.	The story is somewhat creative. The level of vocabulary is intermediate. There are some, but not many details present.	The story is very creative. Students used higher-level vocabulary and detailed descriptions to make the story more exciting.

The rubric was scored out of ten points. The score was multiplied by five for a total score of fifty. Overall, the level of performance in the class was extremely impressive. Scores can be seen in *Figure 8*.

The results show that one hundred percent of the students were able to create a fictional story about bullying of ample length. The majority of the students were able to include a conflict and maintained creativity while writing.

Figure 8

Category	Number of students who received a score of:		
	0	1	2
<i>Grammar</i>	0	15	1
<i>Theme</i>	0	0	16
<i>Length</i>	0	0	16
<i>Plot</i>	0	1	15
<i>Creativity</i>	0	4	12

One area that students struggled with, which is not a surprise due to language proficiency, was their ability to produce a story that was free of grammatical errors. Most errors that were found and corrected pertained to capitalization, punctuation, subject-verb agreement, inserting quotations, and spelling. These are all errors that are to be expected when working with ELLs. Fortunately, during the conferences that I held with each individual, we were able to discuss and correct any errors that were made. I feel that this conference was very valuable to each student, as I was able to clarify exactly where each mistake was made and why it was incorrect. Students were grateful of the time we were able to spend together editing at their writing.

Through assessing the Storybirds, I can conclude that students were able to meet Objectives (2) and (3). They worked collaboratively with each other to utilize a Web 2.0 Tool. Through the use of creative writing, each student compiled a fictional story about the social justice issue that was up for discussion. Every student drafted, edited with me, and eventually published their own creative writing piece. Some finished products can be viewed at the following links:

- (a) *Bullying About Love* by Hobey and Memo (<http://storybird.com/books/bullying-about-love/?token=gtmzbz>)
- (b) *Bullies Make People Feel Sad and Mad* by MrUnKnown2
(<http://storybird.com/books/bullies-make-people-feel-sad-and-mad/?token=nbpbuz>)
- (c) *Sad Little Girl That Got Bullied* by Bebayme (<http://storybird.com/books/sad-little-girl-that-got-bullied/?token=y4yr88>)

ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIT

Overall, I believe that the lesson was successful, as all three objectives that I originally set were achieved; however, I will most likely make a few adjustments before implementing this unit plan next year. These changes revolve around the documentary, student grouping, and time allotted. With these minor adjustments, I believe that not only will the process be more enjoyable for the students, but they will also increase their performance levels of the final product.

Although the documentary was very informative, the amount of time spent on viewing it was more than adequate. I noticed that as the documentary went on, the students began to lose interest due to its longevity. Utilizing a documentary which would have the same impact but a shorter duration would be more suitable for this particular group of students.

Due to computer literacy skills of the class, it was very difficult to tend to the needs of all the different groups that were working at one time. I allowed students to work either independently or in a pair. Only two pairs formed as the other twelve students decided to create their own project. Considering that this was the first time we had ever used this particular Web 2.0 Tool, my assistance was greatly needed all over the computer lab. It was extremely challenging to manage my time and work with each group for a considerable amount of time. This is one of the reasons why I wish I had allotted more time for the project to be completed.

For the next implementation, I will also require that students work with a partner, so that would decrease the number of groups to half of what it was when students worked independently.

Making these two changes would greatly assist students in producing their Storybirds, as I would have more time to draft, edit, and publish with each pairing.

REFLECTION OF STORYBIRD AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL TOOL

The positives of using this tool overpower the negatives at a high capacity. Students were engaged, motivated, and eager to come to class throughout the course of this project. The effort that I received was much higher than normal, as students were able to create their own piece to share with an authentic audience. There were a few minor exceptions to why I may choose to find a different tool for this particular unit; however, it was highly enjoyable for both the students and myself.

Positives of Storybird

The most positive aspect of this tool is that it was so easy to create and manage an account. After being exposed to this tool in RED 746 for just fifteen short minutes, I was able to use the tutorial on the site to create my own class list and assignment. This tool is one that could be utilized by any teacher in any content area, depending on their access to the Internet and computers.

I found the tool to be extremely accommodating to the ELLs in my class. The atmosphere was comforting. Because of their language proficiency, this particular group of kids carries an extremely high-level of stress in response to the requirements they need to meet in a secondary setting. Using this tool allowed them a chance to express their creativity freely while also practicing their writing skills, a literacy aspect that ELLs have great difficulty with. Once the students have an account, they are able to visit the site whenever they want to create new stories.

Some of my students have already revisited the website and asked me to critique their work. This is a tool that the students may continue to use to develop their creativity and writing.

Throughout the course of the unit, I was able to witness my students' pride and enjoyment in their work. As a result, I am able to make use of one of the beneficial links on the site. It is possible to purchase the stories created . When I talked to the students about the fact that they will have a real picture book to bring home, they were extremely determined to put forth their best effort while completing the project. Again, this is another example of the pride and ownership students have of their work when they are able to share it with others.

Negatives of Storybird

There were two elements to the website that I would label as negative. One thing that the students found difficult was selecting a group of pictures to use. Unfortunately, once the students have chosen a group of pictures, they are unable to continue searching for new pictures to use from other groups. Although the students disliked this aspect, I thought it made it necessary to critically analyze and use their imagination to make connections among the pictures as they selected which ones to use. Another downfall of this tool is that in order to even print the books, there is a small fee. This may discourage some people from using the website if they don't have the adequate funds to purchase their final products.

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